

VZCZCXYZ0000
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMS #0474/01 1751055
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 231055Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9739
INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 000474

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PI, G/TIP
WHITE HOUSE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/21/2018
TAGS: [PHUM PREL](#) [KCRM KWMN SMIG ELAB MU](#)
SUBJECT: ROYAL OMAN POLICE, MAJLIS AL-SHURA SUSPEND AREAS
OF COOPERATION DUE TO TIP

REF: A. MUSCAT 444
[1](#)B. MUSCAT 464

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alfred Fonteneau, reasons 1.4 b/d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The dispute over Oman's Tier 3 ranking in the 2008 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report is beginning to affect Post's relations with some government and non-governmental entities in Oman. The Royal Oman Police's (ROP) Criminal Investigation Division informed Post that due to Oman's Tier 3 ranking, the ROP would no longer provide Post with "special access" to criminal statistics or other law enforcement information. The Majlis al-Shura "indefinitely postponed" a Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)-funded parliamentary exchange program, a decision, contacts say, that was directly tied to TIP. The Oman Journalist Association (OJA) also informed Post that it was withdrawing its application for a MEPI local grant due to TIP. While these developments appear to be uncoordinated, they are symptomatic of a politically-charged environment in which some Omanis and government bodies are unwilling to be associated with the USG at this time. End summary.

- - - - -
ROP Limits Access to Information
- - - - -

[1](#)2. (C) During a June 22 meeting with Post's Regional Security Officer (RSO), high-ranking officials in the ROP's Criminal Investigation Division (CID) stated that Post will no longer enjoy "special access" to criminal statistics or other law enforcement data due to Oman's Tier 3 ranking in the 2008 TIP Report. Brigadier General Suheil Fadel, speaking "in the name of the Inspector General (IG) of the ROP," stated that the ROP felt "stabbed in the back" by the US report, and that while the ROP always has shared statistics and information on criminal trends with the Embassy, including letting emboffs tour the ROP's central prison (ref) and detention facilities, Fadel saw the report as evidence that the US had abused the "privileges of its relationship" by mischaracterizing the ROP's record on human rights. After a long tirade against the report and the U.S.' own record on human rights, which he characterized as "worse than Oman's," Fadel stated that Post should make all future requests for information through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, implying that responses could face considerable administrative delay. (Note: Post is concerned that the ROP's decision to limit our easy access to information may negatively affect our ability to assess the security situation in Oman. End note.)

- - - - -
MEPI Activities Affected
- - - - -

[1](#)3. (C) Post also has learned that the Majlis al-Shura - the

lower house of Oman's proto-legislature - has "indefinitely postponed" its participation in a MEPI-funded parliamentary exchange program, which would have sent mid-level staffers to Lithuania June 30-July 4, as a direct result of the ongoing dispute over Oman's Tier 3 ranking. The International Republican Institute's (IRI) resident representative in Oman, who has been organizing the exchange program as part of MEPI and the IRI's long-standing initiative to build legislative capacity in the Sultanate, told poloff that the decision came as a complete surprise. The Secretary General personally had agreed to the program dates on June 1, he said, and Shura officials subsequently confirmed staffers' participation as recently as June 11 - three days before the Shura's public denouncement of the TIP Report (ref A). Said al-Margibi, Director of Protocol and Public Affairs at the Majlis al-Shura, candidly told poloff on June 22 that the Shura's Chairman, Sheikh Ahmed bin Muhamed al-'Issai, and Secretary General, Mohammed Abdal-Quadir al-Dhahab, postponed the program to "send a political message" over the TIP Report.

¶4. (C) Post has not discovered any other instances in which current MEPI programs have been affected by the TIP dispute. However, a board member of the Oman Journalist Association (OJA), a non-governmental organization that issued its own statement denouncing the TIP Report just three days after the Shura (ref B), informed Post's MEPI Coordinator that the board had decided to cancel its application for a MEPI local grant to run a junior journalist program. He said that the organization made its decision because many board members felt that they had to "pick a side" in the TIP dispute with the U.S. While the board left open the possibility that it might be willing to participate in the initiative in a less conspicuous role as a program partner, the board member

frankly stated that it is "politically difficult" to be associated too closely with the USG right now.

-- -- --
Comment
-- -- --

¶5. (C) Comment: Post has no evidence that the Majlis al-Shura, ROP or OJA were directed to take these actions as part of a centrally-orchestrated campaign of disengagement with the U.S. over TIP. In the case of the Majlis al-Shura, for instance, Margibi emphasized that the decision to postpone the program was purely "an internal one" and not directed "from the top" or any outside ministry. The Director General of ROP Customs, with whom Post has shared a very open relationship, assured poloff that he has not received any direction from the ROP's Inspector General to cut off or limit communication. However, Fadel's comments reflect a deep sense of betrayal over the TIP Report, and we cannot rule out the possibility that more ministries or government institutions that share this feeling may make similar decisions to limit cooperation with us. In addition, the daily barrage of negative articles on TIP in the local press most likely will make it increasingly difficult for us to continue business as usual. End comment.
FONTENEAU